

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

EXHIBIT 1



Print

Close
Window

Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary

October 21, 2005

October 21, 2005

Dear Chief State School Officers:

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush and the U.S. Congress agreed to a plan to eliminate our Nation's significant academic achievement gaps, especially in mathematics and reading. This plan, embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), recognizes that teacher quality is one of the most important factors in improving student achievement and eliminating these achievement gaps. As a result, the law set the important goal that all students be taught by a "highly qualified teacher" (HQT) who holds at least a bachelor's degree, has obtained full State certification, and has demonstrated knowledge in the core academic subjects he or she teaches. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) reinforced this goal by aligning the requirements for special education teachers with the NCLB requirements.

Early in the 2005-06 school year, I am pleased to tell you that NCLB is working at the national, State, and local levels. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that achievement gaps in reading and mathematics between white and African American 9-year-olds and between white and Hispanic 9-year-olds are closing. We have made more progress closing these gaps in the last five years than in the previous 30 years combined. There is also evidence that States are improving the quality of their teaching forces. School districts are changing their policies to prohibit hiring teachers who do not meet the HQT requirements, and States are now reporting that a significant majority of their teachers are highly qualified. Districts are taking steps to ensure that highly qualified teachers are distributed equitably among classrooms with students from affluent and disadvantaged families by offering extra training or financial incentives to teach in hard-to-staff schools. States are raising standards for teacher preparation programs, and nearly every State now requires beginning teachers to demonstrate knowledge of the subjects that they will be teaching.

However, despite the progress we are making, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that each State can meet the goal that every child is taught by a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2005-06 school year. In our ongoing visits and communications with State and local officials, we are often asked what will happen if, despite their best efforts, districts cannot hire a highly qualified teacher for every class in a core academic subject by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Personnel decisions are made at the State and local levels, and the law relies on education leaders in the States to make the best educational decisions for improving student achievement. The purpose of my letter today is to assure you that States that do not quite reach the 100 percent goal by the end of the 2005-06 school year will not lose federal funds if they are implementing the law and making a good-faith effort to reach the HQT goal in NCLB as soon as possible.

REASONABLE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) will determine whether or not a State is implementing the law and making a good-faith effort to reach the HQT goal by examining four elements of implementation of the HQT requirements: (1) the State's definition of a "highly qualified teacher," (2) how the State reports to parents and the public on classes taught by highly qualified teachers, (3) the completeness and accuracy of HQT data reported to the Department, and (4) the steps the State has taken to ensure that experienced and qualified teachers are equitably distributed among classrooms with poor and minority children and those with their peers. In addition, the Department will look at States' efforts to recruit, retain, and improve the quality of the teaching force. If States meet the law's requirements and the Department's expectations in these areas but fall short of having highly qualified teachers in every classroom, they will have the opportunity to negotiate and implement a revised plan for meeting the HQT goal established in statute and regulation by the end of the 2006-07 school year. However, for States that either are not in compliance with the statutory HQT requirements or are not making a good-faith effort to meet the goal of having all teachers highly qualified, the Department reserves the right to take appropriate action such as the withholding of funds.

As a first requirement in a State's effort to implement the law, it must have a definition of a "highly qualified teacher" that is consistent with the law, and it must use this definition to determine the status of all of its